



# CITY OF CINCINNATI

## BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND PERMIT CENTER GUIDE

### ***WELCOME***

This guide was created to explain the various steps, requirements, and resources available to you from the preliminary review through the final approval of the building permit process. Individual homeowners and experienced building professionals will benefit from the information provided about City requirements for permits and inspections.

### ***OVERVIEW OF THE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND PERMIT CENTER***

The City of Cincinnati's Business Development and Permit Center (BDPC) was established in April, 2004 to provide fast and convenient development-related services. A City team supports the BDPC with representatives from [Buildings and Inspections](#), [Community Development and Planning](#), [the Department of Transportation and Engineering](#), [the Metropolitan Sewer District](#), [the Greater Cincinnati Water Works](#), and [the Cincinnati Fire Department](#). The team effort by all of these Departments results in fast and convenient services. Through the BDPC, the City of Cincinnati is able to provide streamlined plan review and building permit issuance at one location with staff on site to serve your needs.



3300 Central Parkway  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45225  
<http://www.mapquest.com>

### ***HOURS AND SERVICES***

7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday–Friday (Limited Services: 4:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M. - **no cash transactions**)  
7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Monday–Friday for Walk-Through Service

**Please check in with the receptionist upon arrival.** Customer's transactions are completed on a first-come, first-served basis. All cash transactions end at 4:00 p.m. Depending on customer volume and the time of arrival, if cash transactions cannot be completed by 4:00 p.m. you may be asked to return the next business day to complete your transaction. In an effort to provide service in a timely manner, please arrive early.

Payment may be made in cash, by check for the amount due, with MasterCard or Visa, or from a trust account. For your convenience, a trust account can be established to deposit funds against which you can charge your future fee. The Customer Service Section staff at (513) 352-3271 can provide details about the cost of your permit.

## ***SERVICES OFFERED TO HELP EXPEDITE THE PERMIT PROCESS***

### **Walk-Through Service:**

Building permits for residential repairs/remodels (no new square footage) and single story additions, along with commercial/industrial tenant improvement and remodel projects can typically be reviewed and issued over the counter. The cost for this service is \$400.00, except for 1,2&3 Family dwellings, where no cost is incurred.

### **Optional Premium Services:**

- **Phased Permitting:** Separate permits covering the different phases of construction of a building or structure - \$150 surcharge to Usual and Customary (U&C) permit fees for each phase;
- **After hours/weekend plan examination:** Billed at cost plus \$100 per hour in addition to the walk-through fee of \$400.00;
- **Express Plan Examination:** Proposed project construction team (architect, developer, contractor, etc.) meet face-to-face with City permitting team daily during business hours until the project plans are either approved and permit ready for issuance or changes/revisions required are beyond what is possible during the express meeting - \$500 application fee with plans submitted two weeks in advance plus \$800 per hour over and above U&C fees;
- **Same Day Permit Issuance:** Permit applications approved by all reviewing agencies will be issued the same day as approval as long as the request is received by noon - \$250 surcharge to U&C permit fees;
- **Same Day Building Inspections:** If a request for an inspection is received by noon, the inspection will be performed after-hours on the same day – Billed at cost plus \$150 surcharge; and,
- **After-hours and Weekend Inspections:** Billed at cost plus \$75 surcharge for such requests.

The additional fees that the developer or construction professional incurs when they ask for the premium services cover the enhanced service costs. This system enables those who do not seek the Optional Premium Services to receive the same level of service currently provided by the City.

### **Pre-development Conferences:**

A private preliminary project review session is offered to the development community. [The Department of Community Development and Planning](#) facilitates the conferences with cooperation from the various permitting agencies located at the Center. The pre-development conference is not a required part of the permit process; rather it is offered to assist developers with identifying regulatory conditions that impact their projects. The pre-development conference does not result in the issuance of a building permit nor are approvals granted during the conference session. Come in for a pre-development conference. It's free, by appointment. To schedule a pre-development conference, call (513) 352-4310.

### **Preliminary Consultation - Before you apply:**

You are encouraged to call or visit the Business Development and Permit Center before you submit your building permit application. Consultations with plan examiners and inspectors are encouraged for any building project. Inspectors and plan examiners are able and willing to answer specific code questions. Such consultations often prevent costly errors and delays.

Other City Departments and agencies have regulations, which control certain phases of construction. You may be referred to these Departments/agencies to determine if there will be any special requirements. Staff may suggest ideas to make the building process easier for you. Asking us questions at the outset may save you processing time. We're glad to take the time to help you – it's part of why we are here in one location. To schedule a preliminary consultation, call Building Plans Examination at (513) 352-3313.

### **Electrical Permit Process:**

Electrical permits, inspections and plan review are outsourced to the [Inspection Bureau, Inc. \(IBI\)](#). The IBI process is fully integrated with the City's electronic building permit processes. The electrical contractor submits permit applications and plans directly to IBI at their office. The turn around time for electrical plan review is 3 days. The turn around time for electrical permits (at IBI's counter) is about 15 minutes. Permit submittals and scheduling requests can also be submitted on-line. In extremely rare cases, a developer or builder may choose to undertake these tasks instead of the electrical contractor. In these cases the developer or builder may complete the necessary forms at the BDPC and IBI will pick them up. IBI has staff dedicated to the BDPC that is immediately accessible via telephone should any questions arise. For more information please call IBI at (513) 977-4381.

### **Fax-A-Permit:**

This service is designed to provide easy and rapid access for obtaining permits and commercial and residential work which does not require drawings. Permits for items such as furnace or air conditioning replacement, repairs, and plumbing work can be faxed. Prerequisites for using this service are an active escrow account to pay for the permit; an application does not require plans, and a fax number for receiving the permit. As an alternative to an escrow account, a credit card number and expiration date can be submitted with the faxed application. Faxed applications received by 9:00 a.m. on a City workday will generate a faxed permit by 5:00 p.m. the same day. The fax number for permits is (513) 352-1598.

### **Go Digital!**

A new tool will be available through the City of Cincinnati website to help finalize plans as effectively and efficiently as possible. [Digital Document Submission Assistant](#) will help you streamline document submittals. It offers step-by-step directions to help you prepare a set of documents along with the indexing file (submittal.xml) for submittal using appropriate media like CDs, DVDs, etc. All digital submissions must be accompanied with two sets of paper drawings and an application for the proposed work to be performed.

### **Internet Permitting and Plan Tracking:**

Welcome to [EZTRAK](#). You can now track applications, inspections and plan review online. This program is designed to let you check the status of applications by address or project number. You can also review reports and apply for plumbing, mechanical repair and decks online at <http://www.cagis.org/doc>.

### **Code Books:**

Various code books can be purchased from the Customer Services Counter. The following codes, enforced by the City of Cincinnati, Department of Buildings and Inspections, are available:

- Ohio Residential Code (RCO) for 1, 2, and 3 Family Dwellings
- Ohio Building Code (OBC)
- Ohio Mechanical Code (OMC)
- [Cincinnati Building Code \(CBC\)](#)
- Ohio Plumbing Code
- [Cincinnati Zoning Code](#)
- Department of Buildings and Inspections Policies and Procedures

Please call Customer Services at (513) 352-3271 for current prices.

## ***RECOMMENDED INFORMATION TO INCLUDE ON SITE\BUILDING PLANS***

### **Recommendations from Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW):**

- If water issues are a part of the project scope, contact GCWW early concerning water availability by calling Bill Morris at (513) 591-7858 or the Engineering Front Counter (513) 591-7837 to get needed information and requirements. Ask about any site related fees such as water main deferred tap-in-charges;
- Provide a detailed concept plan with existing and proposed rights-of-ways, easements, streets, building sites and utilities. Provide location information using the County Auditor's book, page and parcel, as well as an address. Indicate whether water service is to be conveyed through new water services (private) or extension of water system (public). Each of these two water service options requires an application to be processed separately in addition to the building or plumbing permit;
- GCWW approval of any building permit is not approval for a water main extension or service branch installation that may be shown on the building permit concept plan. After building permit approval, GCWW requires water service application for either extension of the public water mains or individual water service branches;
- Complete an application for water service being sure to provide all of the information on the application and identify all water flow requirements like fire and domestic flows. If you are extending the public water system, please make sure your engineer is involved in the early conceptual review process. If you are purchasing a service branch, similarly please make sure your plumber or sprinkler contractor is involved in the early conceptual review process. Involving the proper people early enough can prevent delays in your project; and,
- Always ask about any charges or fees like water service branch and meter charges, inspection and review fees, or water main deferred top-in charges due.

### **Recommendations from Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD):**

- If sewer issues are part of the project scope, request an [Availability of Sewer Service letter](#) from MSD prior to applying for a building permit. For more information or any questions, please call (513) 244-1330;
- Applicants should verify with MSD all on-site stormwater retention and detention requirements prior to permit application by calling (513) 244-1350; and,
- For projects involving new food service, car washes, or other industrial uses, contact MSD's Division of Industrial Waste at (513) 557-7000 prior to permit application.

### **Recommendations from Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE):**

The Developer, Architect, or Engineer should contact the Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) at (513) 352-3463 for input and guidance early in the planning process if the proposed development would involve:

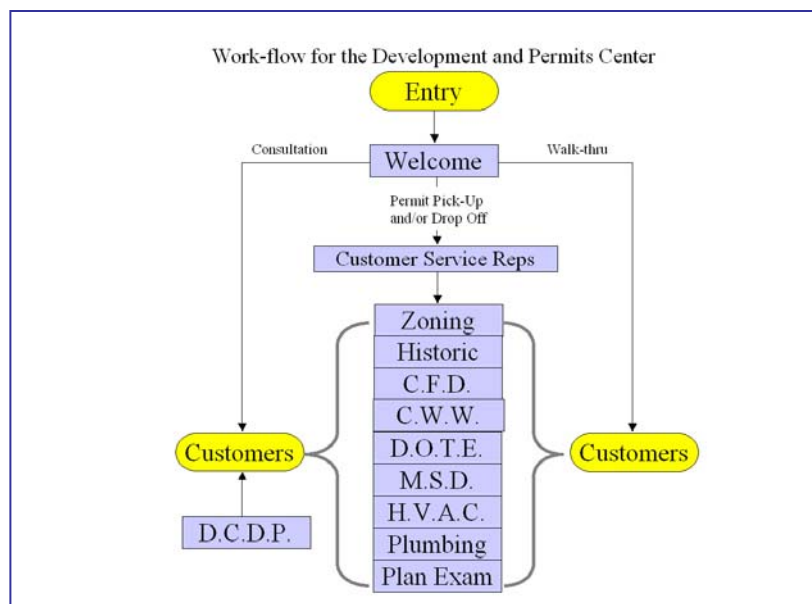
- Construction within the street or sidewalk areas, including sidewalks, driveways, and special surfaces;

- Temporary blockage of the street or sidewalk areas;
- Change in the location or elevation of the sidewalk or street. Examples include new buildings and garage entrances;
- Relocation of existing utilities;
- Construction beyond the property line that encroaches into the space set aside for the public sidewalk or street. Examples of such encroachments include permanent or temporary foundations; basements and utility vaults; facades, marquees, or awnings; and, door swings or balconies. If permitted, these features will require a Revocable Street Privilege (RSP), a permanent easement, or a lease; all will require review by City agencies and public and private utilities. These reviews typically take 60-90 days with no guarantee that such use will be permitted. DOTE personnel cannot sign-off on any building permit until the request for this use is formally approved;
- A change in the location of pedestrian or vehicular access to the property from the street or sidewalk;
- A significant change in the number of vehicles or pedestrians accessing the property from the adjacent street or sidewalk; and
- Assignment of new street addresses. Consult with DOTE personnel for any addressing issues or need for new/multiple addresses prior to permit application. In some cases, it can take 3-5 days to research and assign an address so a building permit application can be accepted.

#### **Recommendations from the Cincinnati Fire Department (CFD):**

- For residential structures, the following is required on the building plan:
  - One Fire Hydrant within 500 feet of the furthest part of the structure
  - Adequate access for firefighting as determined by the fire commander
- For commercial structures, the following is required on the building plan:
  - Two Fire hydrants within 400 feet of all parts of the structure
  - Adequate access for firefighting as determined by the fire commander

### ***THE PERMIT PROCESS***



**Submit Application:**

The Permit Application requires information about the construction project. You will be asked to document “who” will perform the work, “what” work will be done, “where” the work is located, “how” the work will be done. Four (4) sets of documents, drawings and specifications of the proposed work will have to be submitted for review. An application fee must be paid upon submittal of the application and plans. \$25.00 Residential - \$75.00 Commercial & Multi-Family

**Wait During Review Process (Walk-Through Service):**

The majority of permit applications are processed with little delay. Building permits for residential repairs/remodels (no new square footage) and single story additions, along with commercial/industrial tenant improvement and remodel projects can typically be reviewed and issued over the counter. We come to you. Simply request a “Walk-Through”, you will be directed to a cubicle and all necessary Departments will come to you and review the project. No need to travel from location to location. Let us do the walking for you. The Code Official will determine if your project qualifies for a walk-through service. The cost for this optional service is \$400.00, with the exception of 1,2&3 Family dwellings, which incurs no cost. Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**The Review Process:**

- A. If all reviewing agencies determines compliance with the code and other applicable regulations, the application is approved and a permit is issued; or,
- B. After your application is submitted, plans are sent and reviewed by Zoning and Building Plan Examination. Other City Departments and agencies have regulations, which control certain phases of construction. Depending on the nature of the project, the review could involve several Departments. Buildings and Inspections will electronically route plans to these Departments for simultaneous review. If compliance is not determined, your application as submitted is disapproved.

**Corrections, Clarifications and Changes:**

Minor corrections can be made on the original plans submitted. However, if major changes are necessary, or if minor corrections are numerous, you will be required to correct and resubmit copies of revised plans. Initial submission of thorough and complete plans will help avoid numerous revisions. Revisions to plans will be assessed a fee (\$50.00 for 1, 2, & 3 family residential structures or \$150.00 for commercial and multi-family structures).

**Issuing the Permit :**

After the City determines that the plans satisfy all code requirements, you will be notified of the approval and asked to pay all remaining fees. Upon payment, we will issue a building permit. The building permit is the document granting legal permission to start construction.

**Engineering Changes:**

When an applicant wants to make a minor change to plans after issuance of the permit, the applicant should confer with the plan examiner to determine whether the change should be submitted as an alteration requiring a permit or as an engineering change. There is a \$40.00 processing fee due at the time of submittal, and \$60.00 approval fee, except for 1, 2 or 3 family dwellings.

**Inspections:**

Each phase of construction must be inspected to make certain the work conforms to the Code, Building Permit and the Approved Plans. If an inspector finds that some work does not conform to approved plans, the inspector will advise that the situation is to be remedied. If the violation is serious, a stop work order may be posted until the problem is resolved.



Inspectors are also responsible for investigating complaints about properties and having any code violations corrected. Each permit or complaint is assigned to an inspector who will see that items conform to all provisions of the applicable building codes and/or the [Cincinnati Zoning Code](#).

Inspectors may be contacted between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. on weekdays. Normally, 24 to 48 hours advance notice is required. To schedule an inspection, call (513) 352-3275 for existing residential or (513) 352-3267 for commercial and new construction. For complaint-related issues, please call the Customer Service Call Center at (513) 591-6000.

### **Completing Your Project:**

Although it is essential that you complete the inspection process, you do not have to finish your project during any fixed time period. From the day you pick up the permit, you are allowed twelve months to begin work on your project (with one renewal granted for an additional 12 months). Once construction begins, you must continue to work on your project to avoid permit expiration (no lapse greater than 6 months). When work is completed, you need to call to schedule your Final Inspection. When all final inspections have been successfully completed, the Building Inspector may issue a Certificate of Occupancy, if required for your project.

### ***REQUEST FOR BUILDING PERMIT RECORDS***

All building permit records are available for public inspection. You are entitled to access public records, under reasonable conditions, and to copies of those records, upon paying the cost of making the copy. Due to the method that our files are maintained and staff time constraints, we cannot scrutinize every report filed to find the exact information requested. Searching for a specific item, such as a Certificate of Occupancy/Inspection, Housing Orders, Building Permits, etc., are filed by address but are intermingled with all other records pertaining to that address. A request to review a building permit record should be made to the Customer Service Section. The record will be pulled and we will provide a comfortable place and instructions for the requesting person to review the records. Copies can be reproduced at a rate of five (5) cents per copy for 8 ½ x 11 and 8 ½ x 14 papers. Please allow reasonable time to complete your search.

For further information, please call our Customer Service Section at (513) 352-3271, we will be happy to assist you.

Visit our website at <http://www.cincinnati-oh.gov/buildings> or visit us at 3300 Central Parkway, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45225, for the latest updates to the information contained in and referenced by this Guide.

We hope this guide offers you introductory information as you plan your next home improvement project. For additional information, City staff is available to assist you at the Business Development and Permit Center on a first-come, first-served basis, or you may call the appropriate staff for an appointment.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & PERMIT CENTER  
3300 CENTRAL PARKWAY  
CINCINNATI, OH 45225**

**WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU**

**Buildings and Inspections**

B&I Administration  
Phone: 513-352-3260  
Fax: 513-352-1504

Existing Building Inspections  
(Existing Residential)  
Phone: 513-352-3275  
Fax: 513-564-1708

Elevators  
Phone: 513-352-3270  
Fax: 513-352-6104

B&I Customer Services  
Phone: 513-352-3271  
Fax: 513-352-2579

**Other City/Contract Agencies**

Community Development & Planning  
Phone: 513-352-4310

Transportation & Engineering  
Phone: 513-352-4313

Metropolitan Sewer District  
Phone: 513-352-4311

Greater Cincinnati Water Works  
Phone: 513-352-4312

General Building Inspections  
(Commercial & New Construction)  
Phone: 513-352-3267  
Fax: 513-352-1598

Plumbing  
Phone: 513-352-5300  
Fax: 513-352-1598

Plan Examination  
Phone: 513-352-3313  
Fax: 513-352-2378

Zoning  
Phone: 513-352-3273  
Fax: 513-352-2378

Cincinnati Fire Department  
Phone: 513-352-4314

Inspection Bureau, Inc.  
Contract Electrical Plan Review &  
Electrical Inspections  
250 W. Court Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202  
Phone: 513-381-6080